DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 131 836 IR 004 207

AUTHOR Fork, Donald J., Ed.
TITLE Systems of Cooperation and Public Relations: A Summary Report of the Panel on Media and Public Relations.
PUB DATE Nov 75
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Pennsylvania Learning Resources Association Annual Conference (Hershey, Pennsylvania, November 1975); For related documents see IR 004 206-209

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Colleges; Communications; *Mass Media; *Public Relations; Speeches

ABSTRACT

This report presents transcripts of speeches delivered at a conference intended to relate some effective uses of communications media in public relations programs. Topics included: (1) communications in industry; (2) media and public relations--a representative view of the army, defense department, and government; (3) relating to the public through media; (4) the state of the art in college public relations; and (5) media, religion, and public relations. (EMH)

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SYSTEMS OF COOPERATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS:
A SUMMARY REPORT
OF THE PANEL ON MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Edited

by

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EDUCATION & WELFARE
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EDUCATION

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Pennsylvania Learning Resources Association

Hershey, Pennsylvania

November 1975

IR004207

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THE PANELISTS

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INTRODUCTION

Although public relations in one form or another has been practiced throughout history, it has only been in recent times that new technologies have made possible unique and sometimes dramatic means of communication that are capable of capturing and influencing large numbers of people. Since the evolving field of public relations has found practitioners in a myriad of fields, it is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to determine the many approaches being taken at any one time.

In hopes of shedding some light in this area, panelists representing the fields of business, government, education, and religion were brought together at the Fall Convention of the Pennsylvania Learning Resources Association held in Hershey, Pennsylvania in order to share their views and to relate some of the latest and more effective uses of the media in their public relations programs. If their remarks, as presented in this paper, can aid the members of the Association in doing a better job of using the media for their own public relations efforts, then the purposes of this panel have been met.

DJF

COMMUNICATIONS IN INDUSTRY
BY
Michael E. Herron

In recent years an increasing number of businesses have begun to recognize the importance of effective public and employee communications. No longer is the communications effort limited to the "hiring of a couple of editors, burying them some place out of sight in the organization, and saying to them 'Get out your publication on time, don't print anything controversial, and above all, don't make anybody mad'." [1] This transition from a part time low paid clerical function to a high level professional communications effort has been, for the most part, a result of several factors; including the imposition of government regulations upon corporations to disclose accurate financial information; the emergence of a professional investigative public media; an awareness that internal communications programs can help to motivate, persuade, and enable the employee to identify with corporate objectives; and the increasing sales competition of company products and services in the consumer market place.

Today the Securities and Exchange Commission requires that corporate statements accurately reflect the financial picture of the company, and corporate officers can be held personally liable if an intentional falsification of fiscal information is released. Obviously, this alone often

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[1] Lynn A. Townsend, "A Corporate President's View of the Internal Communication Function," Readings in Interpersonal & Organizational Communication, ed. R.C. Huseman, et al. (Boston, 1974), p. 70.

necessitates the need for a public relations professional who understands corporate finances and how to report them.

Likewise, an ever increasing determination of the press and radio and television to uncover corporate activities that have a direct influence upon the public. Examples of this are reports concentrating on the role of the oil companies and utilities in the energy crisis; the affects of uncontrolled pollution by industries upon the environment, and the social and economic impact that has resulted from numerous company layoffs, strikes, and in many cases, bankruptcies.

Corporate expansion has also been instrumental in upgrading the employee communications efforts of many of the Fortune 500's. During the sixties single product or service line companies evolved into giant conglomerates and holding companies, and even today despite harsh economic times, many of these same companies have expanded their geographic bounds in search of a profitable international market. With this expansion, layer upon layer of middle management levels have surfaced often resulting in the disappearance of personal contact between executive management and the employee. In an attempt to rectify this communication gap, businesses have begun to rely on regional employee meetings hosted by senior management; the use of cost effective media (such as closed circuit television) to present information in a consistent and uniform manner; and the publication and distribution of "employee-centered" newsletters that allow the reader to respond and be heard.

Competition has also triggered a need for the professional communicator within industry. Advertising is a multi-billion dollar business, and consumers are constantly deluged with campaigns emphasizing the superior qualities of the products and services they offer. While it may be true that many companies can sell without advertising, it is almost always certain that consumer sales increase when the name is well known, and consequently there must be an effective industrial advertising liaison between corporate management, the ad agency, and the buying public.

Communications is searching for, and in many cases, has begun to achieve a professional status in business. An increasing number of corporations are hiring qualified experts and establishing complete communications departments. But communications in business is still in its formative stages. Once these experts consistently develop creative operational (human) communications programs, then the first significant milestone will be reached.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS -- A REPRESENTATIVE VIEW
IN THE ARMY/DEFENSE DEPARTMENT/GOVERNMENT
BY
Larry Ross

In order to discuss the state-of-the-art as we see it today in media and public relations, we have to consider the period in which audiovisual materials were introduced on a wide scale for governmental and military applications. The Government, mainly the Defense Department, was faced during the Second World War with the major responsibility of training millions of men and women in a myriad of technical and specialized fields. This brought about the widespread use of new equipment such as the opaque projector, the overhead projector, and 16mm film. In addition, other audiovisual equipment was specially designed for educational purposes related to specific defense needs.

As years passed, the Government as well as business and industry found that these educational tools could be used effectively in the dissemination of information to the general public for the purpose of improved public relations. It seems that now whenever a representative of the Government is asked to make a presentation, he always uses an audiovisual device with a prepared message. We have learned that one can communicate much more effectively, using fewer words, through the use of a prepared presentation recorded on audiovisual equipment.

As many of us know, the eye has the capability of receiving 430 times as much information as the ear, however, only one percent of all this information is retained. Having these basic facts, the audiovisual designer within the Government has provided extensive visual aids for education, training, research and development, and public information. For the most part, the Department of Army and much of the Government's

funds available for public relations are limited, but their importance is ever present.

The Government has a responsibility to the public to communicate--to remain accountable--to publicize its activities. Through information offices and public affairs programs, the Government constantly strives to keep the public informed. Last year, the Army placed special emphasis on celebrating its bicentennial through the presentation of various multi-media communication programs. The big move was to communicate through multi-projector slide/film/video presentations with an unlimited number of screens functioning at one time along with wrap-around sound--the idea being the spectacular!! We have learned from such experiments that the message was not being received, and as a result are now designing multi-media presentations limited to three and in most cases two screens. The modes of presentation, however, have been mixed to include slides, film clips, and special effects, all reinforced by a timed music track.

The Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), which is made up of 900,000 Army personnel, has produced an imaginative program, consisting of a triple-screen slide/film production depicting Army history backed by FORSCOM's 100 piece orchestra and chorus, dressed in representative Army uniforms dating from 1775. The audience visually receives some 525 slides, plus numerous motion picture clips reinforced by the live music which combines in presenting a very favorable image to the public. This production is traveling throughout the Continental United States, and although

admission is free, many members of the audience find it more entertaining than professional performances for which you and I have to pay an exorbitant admission fee.

Each Government organization which maintains an information/public affairs office, normally has a speaker's bureau for public and community affairs and makes available on a regular basis prints, still photos, film clips, and video tapes to the local newspapers and television stations. Items of national interest are disseminated through the various information offices at the highest level.

Today, the state-of-the-art has moved to video--the portable minicamera, which enables us to communicate more rapidly than ever before. The future will bring random/dial access via satellite.

In the future, it is apparent that with advances in technology, such as improvements in audiovisual hardware and software, communications will improve public relations between our Government and the public it serves.

RELATING TO THE PUBLIC THROUGH MEDIA

BY
Walter J. Vail

The finest public relations available for schools occurs when parents and other adults of the community are involved in the teaching-learning process, and personally witness children learning. The volunteer who spends an hour helping a student learn, quickly gains insight into the difficulties, pleasures, and frustrations of teaching. Corroborative testimony from these individuals, coupled with other communications efforts by professional educators, often add up to a convincing story about what is happening in the schools.

Everyone cannot be a school volunteer, and the testimony of 100 volunteers does not always reach everyone in a community of perhaps 20,000. The school media specialist may be able to help, by using media as further evidence of learning as it happens in school. There are probably at least two ways to do this. One would be to prepare a special slide show, tape, or film to show and describe a school or a program to an audience of parents or citizens. Another way would be to use the media programs that are produced locally by students, teachers, and sometimes even parents, as evidence of the learning that went into producing and utilizing them. This second way has the advantage of involving more people directly, and offers opportunities for public relations during actual utilization sessions.

An example of this second method is provided by a third level teacher at the Academy Street School in Glassboro, N.J. This teacher believes in the experience approach to learning, and she wants to give her students intense and memorable instructional experiences. She is

also interested, in and trained in the use of media. With the help of a media specialist, she decides to have her students produce a television program on videotape. She uses a subject from local history. Her students put language arts and social studies skills together to create the program. Their audience will be their parents.

With the completion of the videotape, invitations are sent out to relatives and other interested community members to visit the newly decorated, colonial style, classroom; enjoy a turkey buffet that has been prepared by a group of involved parents and view the student produced television program. Interest in how it was done builds, as parents discuss the event, and subsequently a group of PTA members visits the high school TV studio, where the program was produced. They are joined by parents of the high school students who worked on crews to produce the program. Later, the videotape is shown to the public at a regular school board meeting, as a "mini-report" from the media department. Finally, a magazine article and a feature news story are released to inform the general public.

The general rule for the use of media in instruction applies to the use of media in public relations; use media as part of a total effort- do not expect it to do the job alone. In the above example, the videotape made by children as a learning effort, served as evidence of the learning that had taken place. Other evidence included the word-of-mouth of the parents involved in utilizing the tape. When the news story was released, it was constructed on a solid base of achievement and personal experience.

Other examples of this use of media for good public relations as well as for instruction can be listed. They include the involvement of the 'ocal volunteer firemen, the police department, a local safety committee, the public library, and the post office, as well as local businesses. Mediated programs, mostly produced by students, have aided in instruction about and with these groups, and have been made available to the public at meetings and gatherings of many different types. Tapes are used in the schools in conjunction with visits by police and firemen, or in connection with field trips to the post office or local businesses.

The basic thrust of media in public relations should be to document solid learning accomplishments. Certainly it can be used for many other reasons, such as gaining support for planning new programs. It can document a need, or show programs from other school districts. But the basic credibility of a school system is built up of past accomplishments, and by being sure that these accomplishments are communicated vividly to the citizens.

Media can bring programs and schools to life for those who do not get personally involved. Media can do this especially well if it tends to corroborate the testimony of eyewitnesses. Members of the community should be involved in the production and utilization of the media, as well as in the presentation of it to a larger audience. A combination of word-of-mouth, media documentation, and mass media information should gradually build the public support for any effective school or program. At the same time, the effective use of media in school public relations can also build support for the increased use of media in the on-going instructional programs offered at both the school and district level.

THE STATE OF THE ART IN COLLEGE PUBLIC RELATIONS

BY

Henry T. Wilkens

Higher education is experiencing difficulties in selling its wares, at least in the form it would like to sell them. Just a half decade ago, interested high schoolers had to apply to a half-dozen or so colleges to be assured of receiving perhaps one acceptance. The picture today is entirely different. It is a buyers' market in higher education and students with only half way decent SAT scores can find a place in the freshman class of many colleges.

Such relative ease in getting into college doesn't mean that colleges have abandoned intelligence-oriented entrance requirements. What it does mean is that a significant number of high school students are approaching post-high school preparation for life careers in ways other than attending college.

Most of higher education has experienced a need for economic belt tightening and this has not been a pleasant experience for people who have not been accustomed to operating on a business-like basis. Many college administrators, for example, used extremely short-sighted planning in over-building facilities needed for the post-war baby boom without taking into account later enrollment projections. Faced with the problem of empty space and surplus faculty, many such colleges have had to now close and/or lay off personnel. Others have attempted a combination of money saving techniques, such as reducing the number of programs offered, putting into effect cost saving programs related to plant operation, or laying off support personnel.

Some colleges are now offering special times for class instruction. Perhaps most notable is the Wharton School graduate program at the University of Pennsylvania which this fall is offering the MBA on a weekend basis with a couple of weeks on campus at other times of the year.

Traditionally, students have applied to colleges without any recruiting effort by the college except a college-night appearance by the admissions officer or some counseling in high school. Little has been done to "hard sell" higher education and it is increasingly becoming necessary to do just that. In a buyers' market, sellers must be aggressive and endeavor to make the buyer want what the seller has to offer. Because higher education has never had to operate on a business-like basis, such pursuit of the buyer is not easily understood by many administrators and is considered distasteful to others. And yet, hard sell is what is needed.

Robert Kristan, vice president - account executive of Barton-Gillet Company, a Baltimore-based communications firm designed to help institutions communicate their own particular concerns and aspirations to their own audiences, says, "The new approach of the 70s is to view recruiting as a marketing problem. The recruiting formula is simple. First, find out what the school has to sell, and then decide who they want to sell it to. What you're really doing is going from an uncoordinated marketing plan to a real, coordinated effort."

To be successful in recruiting freshman students, colleges must employ a full range of sales promotion techniques. Use of media, advertising, and publicity is necessary. A professional public relations practitioner can combine these three elements and create a sales pack-

age that can improve the enrollment picture.

Slide shows have long been a part of the college scene, but now more than ever before they are being used in student recruitment activities. Cornell University has found great success in recruiting students with a film strip, West Point and Annapolis with professionally produced movies, and the University of Missouri with television commercials. Widener College in Chester has been experimenting with a mobile videotape unit and Drexel University has created a mobile AV unit to take to special interest students.

Messiah College during this past week had students manning an information table in the Harrisburg East Mall. In fact, setting up bulletin boards, tables, and exhibits with photographs and information is part and parcel of the recruiting activities of an increasing number of colleges. For example, students from Kalamazoo Valley Community College in Michigan gave live demonstrations of fencing, pottery, and weaving, plus a musical talent show in the community shopping mall. Admissions representatives passed out catalogs and brochures and answered questions of community members not aware of program offerings and availability of financial aid.

Recruiting activities sometimes take other forms. One student recruiter from Wagner College in Staten Island, New York travels throughout the state inviting potential students to talk about Wagner in the unacademic environment of his motor home. Without question, going to students in imaginative ways is an increasing part of the American college student recruiting program.

Unknowingly, one admissions officer, Anthony Pallett, dean of admissions at the University of Chicago acted as a prophet back in 1973 when he predicted, "If the economy continues the way it is going, I foresee a day when all private institutions, even the more prestigious ones, will have to implement strong recruiting measures or they will lose students to the less expensive state schools."

It would seem that higher education is now seeing the light of that day Mr. Pallett predicted would come.

MEDIA, RELIGION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS: THE STATE OF THE ART

BY
John A. Jorgenson

The church has used media in reaching its various publics, probably for a longer time than any of the other social institutions in any community. Early on in its existence, the church employed image, spoken word, written word, sculpture, paintings, music, and architecture. All forms of human communication have at one time or another been utilized for one purpose or another in religious propaganda. Religion continues to rely on personal testimonial, written word, graphic arts, film, videotape, music, and corporate group expression to spread information, to obtain meaning and purpose, to motivate, to influence, and to evaluate its effectiveness.

To assess the state of the art in the church is truly a presumptive task. For religion as an institution draws its members from the same community as the other institutions in a society. Therefore, it, as the other institutions, has access to much of the same talent that creates, influences, and implements the information flow in the other community and social institutions. Religion's limitation, however, lies in its access to more limited funding and this, perhaps, accounts for much of its fragmented or spotty appearance in terms of making use of various media, effective programming, or sustained long-range planning in some areas.

One can say, however, that some forms of the media have been quite thoroughly explored by religious institutions. Print, for example, being inexpensive and effective, has been relied on quite generally as a means of sharing information for some time. Upon investigation, one finds a wide range of printing quality from the more exquisite graphics found

in the slick glossy magazines, to the more ubiquitous mimeograph machine with its messy stencils. Newsletters, books, curriculum pieces, hymnals, worship helps, devotional materials, and, of course, Bibles and related theological material are all prepared in ever-growing quantities to be purchased by church members, professionals, and other interested persons, both in and out of the church.

Radio an under-used medium in the United States, is more widely employed overseas. Often one finds that many a missionary is an accomplished short-wave radio operator, having been forced to communicate with a transmitter and receiver mounted on a sturdy fender of a battered British Land-Rover. It is only recently that religion has begun to use radio for more than a passive listening in to the Sunday worship service or to tune the one-way presentation of self-proclaimed messengers. Occasionally one finds a radio spot that tweeks the imagination into creative thinking. Occasionally there is a talk-show dialogue on theological or social subjects. But all in all it is far too infrequent. Some examples of more creative programming exists in Silhouettes, the Stan Freeberg spots, or those done by the Mennonite Church.

Television has fared somewhat better. Religious institutions have produced several good series such as The Eternal Light, This is The Life, David and Goliath and other programs produced by the Franciscan and Paulist Fathers that have been well received by various audiences. Much additional programming time, however has been lost to religious institutions due to the lack of creative and substantive productions. Of course, there are those singular religious opportunists who have exploited the medium for their own self-centered purposes.

Film has had a wide acceptance in religious circles. With the wide distribution of 16mm projectors and a number of film libraries making prints easily available, producers have been encouraged to develop religious films. Recently, the cost of film production has limited most of the seemingly never-ending presentations of heathen idol worshippers or predictable plot productions typical of religious producers. Presently, there are more film titles available but they are of shorter length. Many are open-ended encouraging dialogue and multiple screenings of the print in any single learning session.

Other media have also been employed and continue to be utilized. The 12-inch hard vinyl record, the small flexible record or soundsheet, all provide class materials, take-home materials for pupils, or samples for curriculum sales. The audio cassette has found a ready-home in religious use--both as a prepared medium and as a creative medium. The filmstrip and the two-by-two slide have both found wide acceptance also. The ten-by-ten transparency and the overhead projector is just finding its way into churches after several years of acceptance in the public school classroom.

The newer media are not as widely found. The video cassette, along with closed circuit television, and the little porta-pak units are found scattered here and there, chiefly in the large congregations, in the colleges, or in the larger judicatory bodies, as districts or synods.

The video disc, be it Phillips-MCA or RCA, or some other format, has yet to be taken seriously by many religious institutions. The medium promises much, but leaves open the question related to what problem it

solves that cannot be done better with other media. Video disc does present us with some newer ramifications of old production problems, namely, what do we really want to say that warrants this medium or calls for its use. Just because it's there is not a good enough reason. And anyway, who is to say that tomorrow some electronic breakthrough may make the video disc as obsolete as Columbia Broadcasting System's EVR is now.

In summation, one can say the following: Any assessment of the current use of media in public relations efforts by religious institutions must include everything from the most primitive and elementary systems to the most sophisticated and that the majority of its use lies somewhere in between.

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